(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) and (b) Government is making efforts continuously to mobilize additional resources through better marketing of premium products like Speed Post, Express Parcel Post, Business Post, Media Post, etc. Efforts are also being made to generate higher revenue through steps like containing leakage of revenue, introduction of new technology, *viz.* electronic franking machine and value added services such as Greeting Post, Data Post, Passport Service, etc. These efforts, alongwith suitable revision of postal rates from time to time, are likely to result in reduction in subsidies on various postal services.

Excise duties on petroleum products

1388. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH:
SHRI BHAGAT RAM MANHAR:

Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that crude oil prices are increasing day-by-day resulting in increase in petrol and diesel prices in the domestic market;

(b) whether Government have received a proposal from the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas for reducing the excise duty on petroleum products; and

(c) if so, what steps have been taken to reduce the prices of petroleum products?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) the price of Indian basket of crude petroleum oil had risen from US$ 19.54 per barrel in February 2002 to US$ 27.48 per barrel in September 2002. Since then the crude oil price has fallen to US$ 23.30 per barrel in November 2002. After taking into account the international oil prices, the oil companies during the period from February 2002 to 20th November 2002, increased the prices of petrol and diesel on six occasions and reduced the prices twice since 2002.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Government has decided not to make any changes in the excise duty on petroleum products for the present.

Liquidity crisis in co-operative banks

1389. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that a number of Co-operative Banks in the country are facing serious liquidity crises;

(b) if so, details of those banks which are under the scanner for alleged financial irregularities, State-wise;

(c) whether the RBI has issued any guidelines for the smooth functioning of Co-operative Banks in the country;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the action taken by Government against those banks which have been found involved in alleged financial irregularities and the steps taken to safeguard the interest of depositors of these banks?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) and (b) Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has reported that certain urban co-operative banks (UCBs) in the country are facing liquidity crisis. The State-wise list of such banks is enclosed as Statement (*See* below).

(c) and (d) RBI has taken series of measures to strengthen the system of regulation and supervision of UCBs. These *inter-alia* include putting ceiling on operations in call money market and banks finance against shares and debentures, increase in percentage of SLR investments in Government Securities, restrictions on interest offered by UCBs and investment of funds as deposit with other UCBs, etc.

(e) RBI has reported that it has taken action against those banks which have been found in alleged financial irregularities by issuing directions under Banking Regulation Act, 1949, issue of operational instructions, issue of show cause notice for cancellation of licence,